

Language, Universities and Nationalism in India

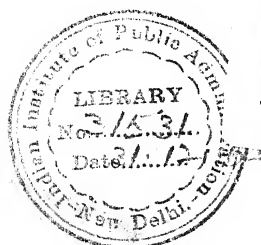
BY

SOM NATH CHIB, M.A., B.A. (Cantab.)

Lecturer in English, Dyal Singh College, Lahore

WITH A FOREWORD BY

H. N. BRAILSFORD



HUMPHREY MILFORD
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
LONDON BOMBAY CALCUTTA MADRAS

First published 1936

PRINTED IN INDIA
AT THE WESLEY PRESS AND PUBLISHING HOUSE
MYSORE CITY

FOREWORD

IN this short essay Mr Chib has attempted, with an honesty and realism that deserve respect, to face the problem of language in India. Has she among the many tongues of her peninsula one, be it Urdu or Hindi, that can serve as the lingua franca of the future? What ought to be the place of her vernaculars in her educational system? Dare she discard English? On the answer to these questions may depend her hopes of political unity, the health of her intellectual life and her place in the family of nations.

It would be wrong for an outsider, who knows no Indian language, to express an opinion of his own on these questions, or to anticipate the answer that Indians must eventually give. But even a foreigner, who is a sympathetic student of India's problems, may dare to say something about the approach to a decision. The right foundation is such an objective study as Mr Chib has undertaken. It is easy to express one's aspirations, easy to appeal to tradition and history, easier still to rouse patriotic or racial vanity on behalf of one language or another. But in the hot atmosphere of a national struggle to face facts coldly and measure them in figures is difficult, and this Mr Chib has done.

I have seen enough in Greece and Egypt of attempts to revive a classical language, and elsewhere, up and down Europe, of the results of teaching in a foreign tongue, to feel sure that Mr Chib is broadly right in his view of the place of the vernacular in education. One language only holds the key to our emotions; one language only conveys to us, surely and instinctively,

the subtler overtones of suggestion which its words possess. That is the language that we used at our mother's knee; the language of our first prayers and our first spontaneous outbursts of joy or grief. To make any other the vehicle of education is not merely to add immeasurably to the pupil's labours: it is to lame his mind in its freedom of movement.

The other thing that a foreigner who is an internationalist in his beliefs may dare to say concerns English. I could understand and forgive a furious national reaction against its use. But that would be to impoverish unpardonably the intellectual life of India. No language today has a range so wide. It will open the New World no less than our little island. It will give Indians what they never had before in their history, a key to the other great civilization of Asia, for every educated Chinese knows English. And finally, may I say, as a European who has enjoyed the hospitality and learned to appreciate the courtesy of Indians, that while they retain English as a second language, they render easier of access to the rest of mankind their thought and their national personality.

H. N. BRAILSFORD

PREFACE

THE problems discussed in this little book are of fundamental importance, for on them rest larger constitutional issues. Eminent educationists and political leaders have debated upon these problems during the last two decades. They have been the subject of a number of departmental blue-books, and at least three University Commissions have inquired into them since 1902. With all the modesty expected of the author of an essay of this sort I cannot help saying that the real problem of education in India—what should be the media of instruction?—has always been evaded or shelved by officials, too busy with administrative problems concerning huge education departments, and by nationalist leaders, too keen on exalting Hindustani to the status of a *lingua franca* of India. Most of the teachers in schools and colleges who should be the first to feel the serious disability imposed on them and their pupils by a foreign medium of instruction are too much steeped in the routine of their work and possess too little imagination to realize the essential stupidity of the present educational system and the futility of their task.

I make no apology for not treating the subject exhaustively and for making certain tentative proposals, because at this stage all that an essay on languages *qua* media of instruction in India can do is to provoke discussion on right lines. I do not want people to agree or to disagree with me, but I do want them to think seriously about this question of vital importance: How far can English replace our vernaculars?

In the end I have to express my gratitude to Mr Basil

Willey, Fellow, Pembroke College and Lecturer in the Faculty of English at Cambridge and Dr M. D. Taseer, Pembroke College, for reading through the manuscript and making valuable suggestions.

S. N. CHIB

*Emmanuel College
Cambridge*

CONTENTS

| CHAPTER | PAGE |
|---|------|
| I. WHAT IS HINDUSTANI? ... | 1 |
| II. INDIAN VERNACULARS AND UNIVERSITIES ... | 21 |
| III. LANGUAGE AND MINORITIES ... | 46 |

NOTE

This essay first appeared in print in *Teaching*, Vol. VIII, and thanks are due to the Editor for permission to reprint it.

CHAPTER I

WHAT IS HINDUSTANI?

IN no other part of the world of equal size are so many languages spoken as in India, belonging, moreover, to such widely separated linguistic families and to such varying stages of development. There are more fundamental linguistic differences between one Indian vernacular and another than between two European languages, or between Latin and English. India, as she is known to us today, from Kashmir in the north to Travancore in the south, from Gujarat in the west to Assam in the east,¹ never possessed linguistic homogeneity. It is wrong to suppose that in the ancient days of Vedic civilization, Sanskrit was spoken or even understood throughout the length and breadth of this vast subcontinent. There is ample evidence adduced to prove this.

In ancient times, almost prehistoric, a series of conquerors came pouring into India and made this fertile land their home. They pushed those already settled further south. Each tribe contributed its share to the ancient civilization of India. Under these circumstances it is preposterous to assert that one language prevailed in India at any time. Students of language know that even if there are no fresh conquests and no new contributions to the existing vocabulary, linguistic changes keep on taking place and such a vast country would not possess one language at any one time.

¹ Burma is separated from India under the Government of India Act, 1935.

2 LANGUAGE, UNIVERSITIES AND NATIONALISM IN INDIA

Under the influence of the founder of the Arya Samaj, as a reaction against orthodoxy on the one hand and westernization on the other, a movement was started about fifty years ago with the battle-cry 'Back to the Vedas'. It aimed not only at reforming the Hindu religion out of idolatry and ritualism, but also at the impossible task of reviving the Sanskrit language and making it the common language of Hindu India. The Arya Samaj is undoubtedly a strong political force in the country, but the schools and colleges it established as a means to the revival of ancient Vedic culture and language have signally failed, to no sane person's surprise, to achieve this ideal. That Sanskrit was dead long ago as a spoken language is no idle conjecture. Albiruni in A.D. 1030 spoke of Sanskrit as a dead language. Regarding the living forms of speech he merely said: 'Further, the language is divided into a neglected vernacular one, only in use among the common people, and a classical one, only in use among the upper and educated classes, which is much cultivated.' In the sixteenth century Akbar's minister, Abul Fazal, the author of the well-known *Ain-i-Akbari*, wrote: 'Throughout the wide extent of Hindustan many are the dialects that are spoken, and the diversity of those that do not include a common inter-intelligibility are innumerable. Those forms of speech that are not understood one of another are the dialects of Delhi, Bengal, Multan, Marwar, Gujarat, Sind, Afghanistan, Baluchistan and Kashmir.'

Persian was the court language under the Mohammedan rule in India. The first European settlers who were not aware of the linguistic complexities thought that only one chief language with its various dialects and sub-dialects obtained in the whole country. They

gave it the name Hindustani. Sir George Grierson, author of the *Linguistic Survey of India*, remarks: 'To Europeans it was the polite speech of India generally and more especially of Hindustan. The name itself is of European coinage, and indicates the idea that is thus suggested, it being rarely used by Indians except under European influence.'

William Carey arrived in India in 1793, and was one of the first Europeans to attempt a linguistic survey of India. He wrote the following lines in 1816:

We imagined that the Tamal, the Kurnatee, the Telinga, the Guzratee, the Orrisa, the Bengalee, the Marhatta, the Punjabee, and the Hindoostanee comprised nearly all the collateral branches springing from the Sungskrit language; and that all the rest were varieties of the Hindee, and some of them, indeed, little better than jargons capable of conveying ideas.

But although we entered on our work with these ideas, we were ultimately constrained to relinquish them. First, one language was found to differ widely from the Hindee in point of termination, then another, and in so great a degree that the idea of their being dialects of the Hindee seemed scarcely tenable. Yet, while they were found to possess terminations for the nouns and verbs distinct from the Hindee, they were found as complete as Hindee itself. In fact we have ascertained that there are more than twenty languages, composed, it is true, of nearly the same words and all equally related to the common parent, Sungskrit, but each possessing a distinct set of terminations, and therefore having equal claims to the title of distinct cognate languages. Among these we number the Juypoorree, Brui, Oodeypoorree, Bikanaree, Multanee, Marwar, Maghda (South Bihar), Sindh, Mythil, etc.

To term these languages dialects of the Hindee is preposterous when some of them, in their terminations, approach nearer the Bengalee than the Hindee, while others approach more nearly to the Marhatta. The fact is, indeed, that the latest and most exact researches have shown that the Hindee

has no country which can exclusively claim it as its own. Being the language of Mussulman courts and camps, it is spoken in those cities and towns which have been formerly, or are now, the seat of Mussulman princes; and in general those Mussulmans who attend on the persons of European gentlemen in almost every town. The fact is that it is not always understood by the common people at a distance of only twenty miles from the towns in which it is spoken. These speak their own vernacular language, in Bengal the Bengalee and in other countries that which is the appropriate language of the country, which may account for a circumstance well known to those gentlemen who fill the judicial department, namely, that the publishing of the Honourable Company's Regulations in Hindoostanee has often been objected to, on the ground that in that language they would be unintelligible to the bulk of the people in the various provinces of Hindoostan.

Before proceeding further attention must be drawn to two things: first, that Hindustani, whatever it may mean today, was at no time the lingua franca of India. The term itself was coined by Europeans. Secondly, it is wrong to presume that Hindustani has been driven out by the English language, for, as William Carey has pointed out in his admirable survey, even in 1793, long before English education was started in India, Hindustani belonged to no particular province under the British rule, and what is more, was not intelligible in most provinces.

That the situation has not materially changed is borne out by the monumental *Linguistic Survey of India*. A huge department under the direct supervision of Sir George Grierson worked for more than thirty years to accomplish this task. The *Linguistic Survey* recently published extends over twenty thick quarto volumes. And this is what its author has to say in the introductory volume:

India—a land of contrasts, nowhere more evident than when we approach the consideration of its vernaculars. There

are languages whose phonetic rules prohibit the existence of more than a few hundred words and there are others with opulent vocabularies rivalling English in their copiousness and in their accuracy of idea-connotation. There are languages which know neither noun nor verb, and whose only grammatical feature is syntax; and there are others with grammatical systems as completely worked as those of Greek and Latin.

But the true modern India will only be known to us when the accurate knowledge of vernaculars has been achieved, a knowledge not only of the colloquial language, but also, when they exist, of the literatures too commonly described as worthless, but which one who has studied them and loved them can confidently affirm to be no mean possession of a no mean country.

Those who make vague, idealistic proposals of 'a common mother-tongue', 'a single language uniting the renascent India', and so forth, will be disillusioned by a cursory study of this first authentic survey. There are 179 languages and 544 dialects to be found in India. Briefly speaking, Indian languages belong to three main families:

- (1) Indo-Aryan
- (2) Dravidian (Munda) and Austro-Asiatic
- (3) Tibeto-Chinese.

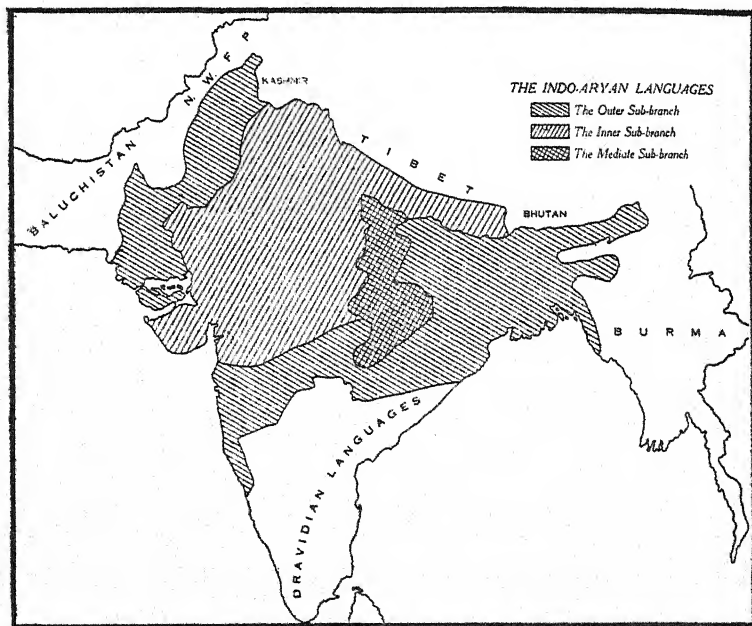
The map¹ overleaf indicates clearly the areas in which they are spoken.

Those who regard Hindustani as the lingua franca of India usually ignore all languages belonging to Dravidian, Austro-Asiatic and Tibeto-Chinese groups. It is true that three-fourths of the total population speak Indo-Aryan languages. But can the other 80 million persons

¹ Taken from the *Linguistic Survey of India*, by Sir George Grierson (Vol. I, Part I), by kind permission of the Government of India.

6 LANGUAGE, UNIVERSITIES AND NATIONALISM IN INDIA

be ignored? Due consideration has to be given to such important vernaculars as Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kanarese, for each one has a literary tradition as old as Sanskrit itself. What is more important, however, is the



fact that there are two groups of Indo-Aryan languages belonging to two different races and ages. There is a greater disparity between the grammatical structures of the two branches than there is between Latin and English. One branch forms an inner sphere and the other prevails in an area almost surrounding the first. There is a mediate branch, too, forming an indifferent link between the two. The map shows the two branches and

the mediate branch. The inner sphere covers roughly speaking the area between the Himalayas in the north to the Vindhya in the south and from Sirhind to the confluence of the Ganges and the Jumna in the east; and the outer sphere surrounding the first extends to Western Punjab, Sind, Maharashtra, Central India, Orissa, Bihar, Bengal and Assam. With such fundamental disparity as exists between the languages of the two branches, it is inconceivable that a language belonging to the inner sphere such as Hindi should become the language of any part of the outer sphere such as Bengal.

It is essential to clear our minds of all confusions about such terms as Hindustani, Hindi and Urdu, for we often find Indian leaders and educationists holding long and inconclusive debates on the possibility of a common language for India without coming to an understanding as to what exactly they mean by each one of these vernaculars. The advocates of Hindustani as the common language of India usually use Hindustani, Urdu and Hindi as synonyms.

As a vernacular, Hindustani may be taken as the dialect of Western Hindi spoken in the Upper Gangetic Doab, in Rohilkhand and in the east of the Ambala District in the Punjab. It has the Western Hindi grammar, but its terminations are similar to Punjabi. But I am concerned with Hindustani as the alleged literary language of northern India and the lingua franca of almost the whole of India. 'It is capable of being written both in Persian and the Nagari characters, avoiding alike the excessive use of either Persian or Sanskrit words. The name "Urdu" can then be confined to that special variety of Hindustani in which Persian words are of frequent occurrence, and which therefore can only be written with ease in the Persian character; and similarly "Hindi" can

be confined to the form of Hindustani in which Sanskrit words abound, and which therefore is legible only when written in the Nagari character.' Even the most ardent lovers of Hindustani, Urdu and Hindi as one and the same language will not find fault with the above definition. We are sure that it will be acceptable to almost all schools of thought.

Exception cannot be taken to the use of Persian and Sanskrit words in Urdu and Hindi respectively, for to do so would be but affected purism, just as would be the avoidance of the use of words of Latin origin in English. A relevant question might be asked: Is there a language, Hindi or Urdu, current today in India which is free from an *excessive* use of Persian or Sanskrit words? If such a language is the literary language of any part of the country, Hindustani, too, exists, and its claims as the common language of northern India, if not the whole of India, may be profitably considered.

When Wordsworth said that poetry should be written in the language of rustic life free from all provincialisms, Coleridge replied that the language of rustic life free from all provincialisms no longer remained the language of rustics. It would soon become the language of cultivated society. Similarly Urdu and Hindi from which Persian and Sanskrit words have been eliminated no longer remain Urdu and Hindi as they are current in Urdu and Hindi magazines, books and newspapers. In 1916 at Calcutta, a large number of Indian leaders, including many who have shaped the course of events in India since, held a conference and decided that India should adopt Hindustani as her national language. Gandhi, Tilak, Mrs Naidu, Pandit Malaviya, Maulanas Mohammed Ali and Abul-Kalam Azad, all actively supported this resolution. It goes to their credit that

most of them have made efforts to promote Hindustani. It cannot be disputed, nevertheless, that during the last twenty years the tendency has been to Persianize Urdu and Sanskritize Hindi, to introduce more and more Persian words and idioms into Urdu until the only Indian thing left in a sentence is the grammar. The Punjab University Enquiry Committee in their Report in 1933 deplored this tendency. 'There is a further danger that, whereas Urdu tends to become more and more Persianized, Hindi tends to become more and more Sanskritized. Thus the gulf between these two vernaculars is becoming yearly wider.' The two vernaculars instead of becoming one, as was foreseen by Indian leaders, have moved further apart. Hindi, in the present form, is of modern origin, having been introduced at the commencement of the last century. Till then, when a Hindu writer did not use Urdu, he wrote his own dialect, Braj Bhasha, Hindustani, Bundeli, etc. Now we have Eastern Hindi and Western Hindi as living literary languages. Eastern Hindi is current in parts of five provinces, namely, Oudh, the Province of Agra, Bundelkhand, Chota-Nagpur and the Central Provinces. According to the census of 1921, 22,567,882 persons speak it. Western Hindi covers the country between Sirhind and Allahabad and between the Himalayas and the valley of the Jumna. About 42,000,000 persons speak it. Braj Bhasha, Hindustani, Kanauji, Bundeli are its main dialects. The rise of Hindi as a literary language from amongst various dialects of Western Hindi and Eastern Hindi has been phenomenal. It has supplied the Hindus of the United Provinces, Rajputana and the Central Provinces with, more or less, a lingua franca. Urdu and Hindi are becoming conterminous with the two major communities in northern

India. They are becoming the handmaids of communal strife. Muslims and Hindus have drifted apart; so have the two vernaculars. Urdu is written in the Persian script and Hindi in the Nagari script, and the controversy between the supporters of the two scripts is as difficult to end as the Hindu-Muslim problem, for both spring from the same root cause. So far as I can see the two will remain the despair of Indian leaders for a long time to come, unfortunately long enough for the purposes of this essay.

Those who use Hindi, Urdu and Hindustani as synonymous terms overlook two facts: that not one per cent of literate Muslims throughout India can read or write Hindi and that in the Punjab, the North-West Frontier Province, Kashmir, Baluchistan and Sind, Muslims do not even understand Hindi when it is spoken and Hindus in these provinces as a rule use the Urdu script and not the Hindi. The following two instances may be read with a new interest by those who have not yet realized the truth of this statement.

(1) The most popular Indian films of the last two years are *Puran Bhakt*, *Raj Rani Mira* and *Chandi Das*. In order to make a wide appeal to audiences all over northern India, the dialogue runs in as simple a Hindi as possible under the circumstances. Yet Muslims all over the Punjab and the Frontier Province were disappointed because they could not fully understand what was being spoken. Some of them understood only as much of the dialogue as an English audience does of the dialogue in René Clair's pictures.

(2) The following protocol is the result of an experiment made in the Dyal Singh College, Lahore, which contains over a thousand students, is avowedly a non-communal institution and therefore may claim to have students with a less communal attitude towards languages:

To a class of 61 students, 38 Hindus, 14 Sikhs and 9 Muslims, a passage from *Saraswati*, one of the best Hindi magazines in northern India, was dictated. The students were given the option to write in either script—Urdu or Hindi. All the 9 Muslims, 12 out of 14 Sikhs and 22 Hindus replied that they did not understand the full gist of the piece dictated.

Then a passage from a well-known Urdu magazine of Lahore, *Humayun*, was dictated. Fifteen Hindus and 6 Sikhs replied that they could not fully comprehend the gist. The rest did not complain.

Besides the two facts already stated, that Muslims do not understand Hindi and Hindus in the Punjab are more familiar with Urdu than with Hindi, another conclusion can be drawn from the above experiment: that our neglect of the vernaculars in the past has produced a large body of 'educated' people who are equally ignorant of all languages. They have not been able to master a foreign tongue, and they have lost their own. Like the Bourbons they have learnt nothing, but unlike them they have forgotten what was their own heritage. Of this later.

In the Punjab English is the medium for the Matriculation examination, but in the history and geography papers option is given to the examinees to write in any medium they like: English, Urdu, Hindi or Punjabi. The following figures of candidates for Matriculation who answered the history and geography papers in the several languages speak for themselves:

| | | | | 1931 | 1932 |
|---------|-----|-----|-----|--------|--------|
| English | ... | ... | ... | 1,370 | 1,260 |
| Urdu | ... | ... | ... | 17,832 | 17,595 |
| Hindi | ... | ... | ... | 564 | 737 |
| Punjabi | ... | ... | ... | 78 | 118 |
| Total | | | | 19,844 | 19,710 |

12 LANGUAGE, UNIVERSITIES AND NATIONALISM IN INDIA

Students in the Punjab take Urdu, Hindi or Punjabi as an optional subject in the Intermediate and degree classes. In 1932, 83 per cent of those who took the examination in the vernaculars selected Urdu.

The newspaper-reading public is a more sure test for judging whether Urdu or Hindi is the chief vernacular of the Punjab. The following figures should prove conclusive:

| URDU DAILY PAPERS | | | URDU DAILY PAPERS | | |
|----------------------|-----|-------------|-------------------|-------|-------------|
| | | Subscribers | | | Subscribers |
| Owned by Hindus | | | Owned by Muslims | | |
| <i>Milap</i> | ... | 12,500 | <i>Zemindar</i> | ... | 3,000 |
| <i>Pratap</i> | ... | 13,000 | <i>Inqilab</i> | | 1,500 |
| <i>Vir Bharat</i> | ... | 4,000 | <i>Ryasat</i> | | 1,000 |
| <i>Bande Mataram</i> | ... | 1,000 | <i>Ahsan</i> | | 2,000 |
| | | | Total | ... | 38,000 |

India is an extremely poor country and 38,000 subscribers mean about five times as many readers, for besides hundreds of readers who cannot afford to buy their own papers and go to reading-rooms and libraries, the usual practice is that only one member in a family buys a paper.

An Indian family, joint or single, is seldom limited to two or three members. As opposed to eight Urdu daily papers serving 150,000 readers, there is not one Hindi daily paper. One Urdu daily paper, *Milap*, recently started a Hindi supplement giving a résumé of the news, but its circulation does not exceed 500.

There are about twenty Urdu weekly papers and about as many Urdu monthly journals published at Lahore. It is to be regretted that exact figures of the number of subscribers are not available, but it will not be too much to say that some of them claim as many as 5,000 subscribers. There is no Hindi weekly or monthly

journal published in the Punjab. It has been many times asserted, not without reason, that at present Lahore is the chief centre of Urdu in the whole of India. All the Urdu daily, weekly and monthly papers of India put together cannot claim so many subscribers as papers published at Lahore alone claim.

I have tried to prove that Hindi is the chief language of the United Provinces, Central Provinces and Central Indian States, and that Urdu enjoys the same status in the Punjab, the North-West Frontier Province and Kashmir. Secondly, that Hindi and Urdu cannot be regarded for practical purposes as one language. We admit that almost the same rules of grammar and syntax govern the two, and perhaps more than 50 per cent of the words are common, but their scripts are different and there are other important differences which cannot be overlooked.

The following table from the Census Report of 1931, showing the number of literate persons using each script in various provinces is of extreme importance.

| PROVINCE OR STATE | PERSONS LITERATE IN | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------|--------------|
| | Gurmukhi ¹ | Hindi | Urdu | Roman Script |
| Baluchistan | 3,490 | 7,111 | 18,422 | 3,844 |
| Central Provinces and Berar ... | ... | 380,950 ² | 44,247 | ... |
| Delhi | 1,821 | 26,008 | 47,358 | 175 |
| Punjab | 198,484 | 216,296 | 908,521 | 6,587 |
| Central India States ... | ... | 255,981 | 29,453 | ... |
| Hyderabad State ... | ... | ... | 192,039 | ... |
| Jammu and Kashmir ... | ... | 776 | 3,178 | ... |
| | 203,795 | 887,122 | 1,243,218 | 10,606 |

¹ Gurmukhi is the script in which almost all Sikhs write Punjabi. Their religious scriptures are also written in Gurmukhi.

² Includes persons speaking Marathi.

Figures for the United Provinces and the North-West Frontier Province are not available. The Census Commissioner bitterly complains that the 1931 census operations were carried on in an atmosphere full of communal recriminations and mutual hatred. Considering that only 564 and 78 candidates at Matriculation chose to answer their papers in Hindi and Gurmukhi respectively, as against 17,832 who did so in Urdu, we cannot help thinking that of 198,484 and 216,296 persons from the Punjab who declared Gurmukhi and Hindi as their script, many were really more at home with the Urdu script. They declared Hindi and Gurmukhi as their scripts because of the pro-Hindi campaign fanned by communal feelings. The reverse is not true of Muslims, for it is a well-known fact that not even one per cent of Muslims know Hindi. The returns from the United Provinces would have shown an overwhelming balance in favour of the Hindi script, only partly to be set off by the above revaluation and by returns from the North-West Frontier Province. Considering the total number of literate persons in the United Provinces, we may say tentatively that in the whole of India the total number of people using the Hindi script is about the same as that using the Urdu script.

The Census Commissioner for 1931 recommends the Roman script as the solution of this problem. He says that sooner or later it will have to be adopted, and quotes Turkey as an example. The Director of Public Instruction in the Punjab offered an 'interesting suggestion' to the Punjab University Enquiry Committee. 'Romanized Urdu has been adopted as the written language of the Indian Army. . . . Our constant squabbles about what should be the vernacular of the country would be solved by this. We should very

rapidly develop a form of Hindustani which would include Urdu and Punjabi words and phrases and become the lingua franca of the country. . . .’ It was indeed a very ‘interesting suggestion’, but, unfortunately, it is nothing more. I wish it were. The fact that only two British officials make this suggestion really goes against it, for they are apt to overlook the important forces which will ultimately determine the issue. It is no use saying ‘Turkey has done it’. Turkey is under a powerful dictator who started by dismissing that anachronism, the Caliph, by making European dress compulsory and has now banned all religious robes and insignia from the country. It must be remembered that in a small uni-linguist country like Turkey uniformity of language and script is easily possible. India is a country where if twenty members of the staff of a college, all highly educated people, or twenty members of a club, assemble at a dinner, four chefs have to be employed to cook the food at four separate places and consequently have it served at four different tables. There are two types of meat eaters and two types of vegetarians: people who believe that an animal should be killed at one stroke and people who do not; people who eat onions and people who do not. The Lilliputians could not decide as to which was the best method of breaking an egg. A war was the result. The ‘one-strokers’ and the ‘anti-one-strokers’ have often followed the example of Gulliver’s satiric tale. If twenty members of a social club cannot sit at a common dinner table because their religious susceptibilities are hurt, if people are not ashamed of their ridiculous susceptibilities which militate against social harmony, but prefer to make a parade of their prejudices, then the idea of the Roman script in place of the three scripts

which contain the classics and scriptures of the three communities may be dismissed as fantastic. I wish we could come to an agreement, but under the present conditions the Roman script has as much chance as Esperanto in Europe. I gather from Esperanto faddists that there are about 300 Esperanto societies in Europe; I gather from the Census Report that there are about 10,000 ex-soldiers who are exerting their silent influence in villages in promoting the Roman script among 335 million people. A Government pledged not to interfere with the religious liberty of Indians cannot afford to do what Kemal Pasha has done. Why should the alien Government raise a controversy in the country over a matter which does not concern it directly? The three respective scripts are becoming conterminous with three communities—Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs—and any attempt to give up any old script for the Roman script will cause a false alarm of 'Religion in danger'. Nothing can be done when Religion chooses to be in danger. In India it is always in danger.

Mr K. M. Panikkar, of Benares University, in a paper read in London about fifteen years ago, said:

The problem, more plainly stated, becomes this: which language are we to choose from among the great vernaculars of India as the basis of higher communal life? The apparent contest is between Hindi, Bengali and Tamil. Neither Tamil nor Bengali, however cultivated their literatures be, can claim to be anything but the language of a particular province, a language spoken by a sub-nationality. But the case of Hindi is different. It is understood all over India. It is understood in a slightly different form by all the Muslim inhabitants of India, and this fact alone makes its claim a matter of incontestable weight. Also, it has a double alphabet, which peculiarly enough, is in this case not a hindrance but an additional claim. Its Nagari character makes it acceptable to all Hindus; its Urdu character makes it acceptable to all

Mussulmans. Thus an acceptance of Hindi would preserve the continuity of our civilization both for our Muslim brethren and ourselves.

Mr Panikkar in his choice of Hindi as the one common language of India passed from Urdu to Hindi with that fatal facility which characterizes all those who have not learnt Urdu nor studied its recent trend. Mark the words, 'Hindi . . . is understood in a slightly different form by all the Muslim inhabitants of India'. Alas, this slightly different form is so radically different that not many Muslims in the predominantly Muslim provinces understand spoken Hindi and not one per cent in the whole of India can read or write it. I fail to see how a double alphabet is an additional advantage. It is the most serious practical obstacle baffling all those who wish to make Hindi or Urdu the medium of instruction in schools and colleges. And Mr Panikkar had yet to live and learn during the last decade that 'our Muslim brethren' do not care a brass farthing for the continuity of 'our' civilization. He had yet to see 'our' great poet Iqbal,¹ Browning's 'lost leader', discarding 'our' civilization for Pan-Islamism and 'our' language for Persian. So long as Muslims and Hindus are moving apart, on divergent paths of Pan-Islamism and Vedic revival, to talk of Hindustani as the national language is sheer hypocrisy.

We are deeply moved when we hear Mahatma Gandhi say: 'I shed tears of blood when I see an Indian boy writing a letter to his father in English.' We think that his 'tears of blood' are perfectly legitimate, though it is no fault of the poor boy. We owe a deep debt of gratitude to Gandhi, for he, more than anybody else,

¹ Sir Mohammad Iqbal, poet and philosopher, Rhodes Lecturer at Oxford for 1935.

has made us realize that we are without a language of our own. It is all the more necessary for us not to be swayed by the tremendous influence of Mahatma Gandhi, but to pause and consider this problem dispassionately. Emotional appeals have been made by Indian leaders—Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru is the last to join their ranks—but emotional appeals are cold comfort when actual facts point to the contrary. If they are not making a mere emotional appeal to our nationalism, it is worse, for it means they are blind to the real situation. Those who talk glibly of Hindustani as the common language of India might be disillusioned if they cast a glance over the following table from the last Census Report.

| NUMBER OF SPEAKERS PER 10,000 OF POPULATION | | NUMBER OF SPEAKERS PER 10,000 OF POPULATION | |
|--|-----------|--|---------|
| Western Hindi ... | ... 2,041 | Burmese ... | ... 257 |
| Bengali ... | ... 1,525 | Lahnda, Western Punjab | 244 |
| Bihari ... | ... 797 | Eastern Hindi ... | ... 224 |
| Telugu ... | ... 752 | Sindhi ... | ... 114 |
| Marathi ... | ... 596 | Bhili ... | ... 63 |
| Tamil ... | ... 592 | Assamese ... | ... 57 |
| Punjabi ... | ... 452 | Western Pahari... | ... 66 |
| Rajasthani ... | ... 397 | Gondi ... | ... 53 |
| Kanarese ... | ... 320 | Pushtu ... | ... 47 |
| Oriya ... | ... 319 | Kashmiri ... | ... 41 |
| Gujarati ... | ... 310 | Other languages | ... 371 |
| Malayalam ... | ... 261 | | |

Let me give the widest possible scope to 'Hindustani' as a lingua franca understood by the speakers of the following languages: Western Hindi, Marathi, Punjabi, Rajasthani, Gujarati, Western Punjabi, Sindhi, Gondi, Pushtu, Eastern Hindi and Kashmiri. The result is 4,519 persons out of every 10,000 can perhaps understand it. It would be Greek to more than fifty per cent of the Indian masses. I admit that in big cities like

Calcutta, Madras, and even Mysore, it is somewhat understood by a fairly large number of people. But how many people live in big towns in India? Perhaps four per cent of the people live in towns with a population of 50,000 or above. It is difficult, I admit, for the *bourgeoisie* not to look upon themselves as the 'whole world'. It has often proved fatal, more often in countries where they form an insignificant minority. India is such a country.

A more reasonable assertion made by the advocates of Hindustani is, if a language borrowed from six thousand miles away can become the common language of India, why should we not make an effort to develop Hindustani which is practically understood by, more or less, 45 per cent of Indians? In the first place English is understood and spoken by hardly more than two per cent of the population, and therefore it is a mistake to call it either the lingua franca of India or to entertain any hopes that it will become our national language at any future time. It will remain the official language as long as we are governed by the British Government, and a suitable common language for business purposes, for a long time to come. In the second place Hindustani cannot replace English—the two are not mutually exclusive—for we would retain the latter for our convenience and not for reasons of national sentiment. That Hindustani may become one day the lingua franca of India we do not question. Under a powerful federal government or a state somewhat on the lines of the U.S.S.R., we may have to use Hindustani for propaganda through films and wireless broadcasting. In the distant future pigs might fly. Our immediate concern should be to replace English by our Indian vernaculars in so far as English is the medium of instruction in schools and colleges.

After carrying out in full, not before, this programme of vernacularization, if the non-Hindustani provinces start teaching Hindustani (in what script?) in the primary schools as a second language, they would be taking a step in the right direction.

CHAPTER II

INDIAN VERNACULARS AND UNIVERSITIES

IT has been admitted that Hindustani cannot be regarded as the common language of India. Europe has many languages, but no common language. French, and now English too, serve the purpose of common languages for trade and commerce and for conducting the proceedings of the League of Nations at Geneva. India is as big as Europe minus Russia and with as much linguistic variety.

The unique position the English language enjoys in India today is the result of the complex history of English education in our country. The main facts are that English is the medium of instruction in schools and colleges, and therefore the Indian vernaculars are neglected. Assuming that it is desirable to have an Indian language as our *lingua franca*, we cannot achieve this end unless we first radically change our system of education. We can effect no substantial improvement in the deplorably ill-planned and wasteful educational system prevailing in India unless we take our courage in both hands and replace English by our own vernaculars as the media of instruction. The problem of choosing a *lingua franca* is intimately connected with the problem of whether English should remain the first language in our educational institutions. But the two have to be considered separately.

English was adopted as the medium of instruction about a hundred years ago as a temporary measure of expediency. The general problem of 'arresting the rapid decay of literature and arts, of strengthening the

vernaculars and imparting instruction in English' began to be considered by Munro in Madras (1822-26), by Elphinstone in Bombay (1823-26) and by William Bentinck in Bengal (1835-38).¹ The famous Hindu reformer and founder of the Brahmo Samaj, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, had already started a movement in favour of English education hand in hand with his drive against *sati* and orthodoxy. In 1823 Raja Ram Mohan Roy wrote a letter to Lord Amherst, the Governor-General, vehemently attacking the plan to establish a Sanskrit College in Calcutta. Then ensued a struggle between the orientalist and anglicists. It was ended by Macaulay's famous Minute of 1835 in favour of the anglicists. It may be said safely that there was a real demand for English education for about twenty years before Lord William Bentinck and Lord Auckland, in 1835 and 1839, wrote in succession decisive minutes endorsing Macaulay's policy.

To avoid confusion I must emphasize the fact that the struggle took place between those who wanted English education and those who wanted to retain and develop instruction in oriental languages, such as Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit. Till 1837 the Court language was Persian. There was no conflict between English and the Indian vernaculars. As Mr Arthur Mayhew points out in his book, *The Education of India*,² 'It is wrong to suppose that the Committee of Public Instruction found in 1835 vernacular textbooks and teaching widely employed in schools and put English books in their place'. There were not enough textbooks in the vernaculars, and the Committee found that most of the textbooks current in schools were written in verse. In so far as the Committee

¹ F. W. Thomas, *History of British Education in India*, 1891, p. 3.

² Faber and Faber.

decided to replace Persian and Sanskrit by English, I think it was a step taken in the right direction. At that time there was no other course open. The Bengal Committee of Public Instruction definitely laid down: 'We conceive the foundation of a vernacular literature to be the ultimate object to which all our efforts must be directed.' Men who controlled the East India Company had other motives, less altruistic and therefore more powerful. They were in need of efficient clerks to carry on the huge secretarial work of administration. They wanted hundreds of clerks to serve as the spare parts of the huge machinery of their rule. On the other hand people like Trevelyan and Macaulay were dreaming of the fulfilment of the vague longings of their Whig souls —of making known throughout the whole subcontinent the principles of Democracy through the study of English literature. English education moved between these two motives till 1854, when Sir Charles Wood, later Viscount Halifax, framed his famous dispatch, which has more or less governed the destinies of education in India so far. What is relevant to our discussion in that dispatch is, as is remarked in the Hartog Committee's Report, that 'Sir Charles laid great stress on the importance of encouraging the study of the vernaculars as the only possible media of mass education'. As time went on the importance of the vernaculars was forgotten. The Government needed more and more clerks to fill the expanding departments, and English education and university examinations became the means to obtain paltry jobs. The country was controlled by an all-powerful bureaucracy, and all its members, even clerks and teachers, became the symbols of the ruling class. Those who learnt English enjoyed a high social prestige. The least-paid teacher in a school was the one who

taught the vernacular, and therefore was the least respected. In the higher classes in schools and colleges the vernaculars had no place in the curriculum. After fifty years it was realized that the Government had no more jobs. Various causes, which we cannot discuss here, made India nationally conscious. Efforts were made to encourage the study of the vernaculars and to reform and reorganize Indian universities in other directions. A number of University Commissions were appointed one after the other in various parts of the country. They all emphasized the need of gradually replacing English by the vernaculars. But prejudices die hard. Macaulay's dream of giving the same status to the English language in India as Latin enjoyed in Europe throughout the Middle Ages found many supporters among Indians. Educated Indians looked with contempt at their vernaculars. Sir Theodore Morison read a paper in London in 1914 before a distinguished gathering of Englishmen and Indians, members of the East and West Society, and strongly pleaded the cause of the Indian vernaculars.

But he found among the audience only two supporters. One member, Mr Desai, said that the vernaculars were dead languages and English the only living language in India. Another member, Mr Tarapore, in his attempt to out-Macaulay Macaulay, said: 'We must not regard English as a foreign language, for originally it came from the same stock as our language.' And we still meet, now and then, such comic persons who regard linguistic changes as of no account in their stupid fraternal zeal. We are equally justified in regarding a monkey from South India and Mr Tarapore and others of his ilk as brothers, for originally they came from the same stock. At the Punjab Education

Conference in 1912 one headmaster proposed that Urdu and Hindi should be included among the optional subjects in the Matriculation curriculum, and he found none from all the patriotic members representing Hindu and Muslim interests to support him. The vernaculars could not enjoy even the status of an optional subject at Matriculation. Sir Asutosh Mookerji, the Vice-Chancellor, proposed to include Bengali and other vernaculars among the optional subjects taught in colleges; but he met with strong opposition in the Calcutta University. In the most patriotic province, Bengali language and literature have won tardy recognition in the University as subjects of study. All those who discussed—and their number is legion—the problem of education in India took it for granted that English should remain the medium of instruction in all the higher classes.

If such has been our attitude for three-quarters of a century towards our vernaculars, is it surprising that when people under the influence of the National Congress movement after 1920 wanted to replace English by the vernaculars in schools and colleges, they found no suitable textbooks? But we have moved forward. A powerful vernacular press has been developed in every province during the last fifteen years, a great many books have been written during the last decade, and there is a distinct body of opinion in favour of teaching even in colleges in the mother-tongue. That there has been a definite change in the attitude of educationists in India is apparent from the following passage from the Report of the Punjab University Enquiry Committee, 1932-33:

But the originators of the Education Policy did not intend that with the introduction of Western learning the study of

the classical languages should be neglected. They merely decided that in institutions supported by the State, English and not Sanskrit or Arabic should be the medium of instruction. Moreover, both parties in these controversies agreed that, though the vernaculars were not yet sufficiently developed for use as the media of instruction, they should be improved in the hope that eventually they might be used as the media for the diffusion of Western knowledge. The Government could not have been expected to forecast the subsequent neglect of vernacular education which has been so distressing a feature of Indian educational development, nor could they have foreseen the sad neglect of the teaching of the vernaculars in schools and colleges. Even a cursory glance at the report of the Education Department shows clearly that the vernaculars are only too often the worst taught of all school subjects. This is due not so much to active hostility as to the fact that vernacular teaching is regarded almost inevitably as merely subsidiary in a scheme of Western education.

It is a grievous impediment to students that they still receive instruction in Western learning through the medium of a foreign language. The time spent in obtaining mastery of English as the vehicle of instruction is very great, probably amounting to almost one-third of the total period of education; and it is doubtful whether the object of all this labour is even then properly achieved by many students.

Yet we are acutely conscious of the fact that as yet there are not enough textbooks available. The Royal Commission on Agriculture recommended that small libraries containing elementary vernacular books should be established in villages. A Deputy Commissioner who appeared as a witness before the Hartog Committee a few years later said: 'The libraries established in villages would not tempt me to literacy even on the Robinson Crusoe island.'

The Indian Universities Commission in 1902, the Calcutta University Commission in 1917, the Punjab University Enquiry Committee in 1932-33 and scores of departmental reports have pointed out the inadequacy

of textbooks in the vernaculars. The nationalist movement has helped the growth of the vernaculars more than educational committees, and yet no textbooks have been written. This is because we have so far persisted in putting the cart before the horse. Demand creates supply. Our old, cautious educationists, in charge of universities and education departments, always tend to burke the real issue. Here is a characteristic remark of one of them: 'No one regards the question as finally settled, and all welcome the healthy zest for experiment which now prevails. Its bearing on our present topic is very real, but the extension of the use of the vernaculars is so very recent that one can only hint at possibilities. There are no data for definite conclusions.' The writer has completely evaded the real problem behind a smoke-screen of clever platitudes, and this is what we have been doing for a long time. But it cannot be evaded or postponed any longer. We have got to make a beginning now. As soon as we start teaching our students in the vernacular, in schools as well as colleges, textbooks will follow.

I am not indulging in destructive criticism alone. I put forward the following plan with necessary changes to be made in various provinces as conditions demand:

1. The medium of instruction and consequently of examinations up to Matriculation in all subjects (except of course English) should be the vernacular of the area controlled by the university.

2. After four years for all arts subjects in colleges up to B.A.—History, Economics, Philosophy, Politics, Mathematics, Geography, etc.—the medium should be the vernacular.

3. (a) In the case of the sciences, Medicine, Physics, Chemistry, Botany, Zoology and professional courses such

as Engineering, the *status quo* may be maintained for ten years more.

(b) Teaching in Law for the LL.B. degree should be done in the vernacular, for in all lower courts the vernaculars are freely used for most purposes.

4. English should be taught as a compulsory second language in all schools and colleges. The study of the English classics—poetry and prose—should be confined to those who want to take a degree in English literature.

5. Every university should establish a Board of Compilers, who should translate textbooks in arts and science subjects from European languages. Where two or more universities have a common vernacular, they may establish a common Bureau of Compilation.

The Punjab and Calcutta Universities have taken the lead by their decision to allow candidates at the 1937 Matriculation examination to answer the papers in all subjects (except English) in their respective vernaculars. This will naturally mean that the vernaculars will be used as the media of instruction in the schools in the two Matriculation classes from 1935. But at the Inter-University Conference held in March, 1934, the motion that the vernaculars should be introduced as the media of instruction in colleges was negatived, and even a less equivocal proposition, that the subject should be referred to the Senates of the various universities for opinion, was not accepted. The distinguished gentlemen—vice-chancellors, deans and professors, who were delegates to the conference—pleaded that they would, by passing such a revolutionary measure, impair the cause of education. Some of them said that our educational system would be reduced to a farce. The reply is that they have behaved like the female elephant who, having accidentally killed the hen, out of deep remorse, went

and sat on the eggs to hatch them. In their vain effort to save 'education' they have made it altogether sterile. Its fount of inspiration is gone, its life-blood is dried up. They have destroyed its whole *raison d'être*. The educational system as it exists is not only a farce, but a fraud perpetrated on unsuspecting millions.

I need not pause to consider the argument that teachers in colleges who have for years lectured in English will find it hard to teach through the vernaculars. Their hardship is a question of minor importance. Two things can happen: they will make all possible efforts to adjust themselves to new conditions, or they will refuse to do so. Most of them are too worldly to have any convictions or to put up an active fight against such a drastic change. It will be a good thing if they co-operate with us; if they do not, we should ask them, perhaps reluctantly, to resign. Hundreds of far better qualified young men, at present unemployed, would gladly come forward to replace them and justify the new system.

The arguments advanced by these distinguished educationists—they would not be distinguished if they did not justify the system they represent—are quite hackneyed by now. It is generally fatal to listen to the arguments of administrative officials of universities in matters of educational policy affecting the well-being of a whole nation, for they are so preoccupied with petty practical difficulties that they cannot see the wood for the trees.

When once we introduce the vernaculars as the media of instruction as well as examination, as two major universities have done and the rest are likely to do, we can no longer cry a halt. It stands to reason that a schoolboy who reads History, Geography, Mathematics and other subjects in a certain vernacular will find it

easy to use the same medium when he enters college. He will give preference to the vernacular over English at the Intermediate examination, and having passed that examination, he will insist on carrying on his studies in the same vernacular in the B.A. classes too. It will be a continuous process spread over four years, and a university which tries to stop it or retard its pace, having once admitted the vernaculars to the Matriculation stage, will soon find itself in a quandary.

When once the demand is created an adequate supply of textbooks will follow in four years. Indian professors and teachers have qualified themselves in nothing if not in producing textbooks with an amazing rapidity. But the proof of the pudding is in the eating. The real test of a play is the theatre, of a textbook the classroom. Unless we begin to teach through our vernaculars, we cannot have good textbooks, nor possess a comprehensive terminology for specialized usage. It is the day-to-day classroom work which decides whether the newly-coined terms in a particular language are suitable or not. So long as we are afraid of making new experiments and so long as we wait for a complete set of specialized terms and a large supply of books to fall from the vault of heaven, we cannot hope to improve our standards of education.

I may bring to the notice of my readers the striking analogy between conditions in China and in India.¹ China too is a large eastern country, backward and baffled. But as it has remained, more or less, an indepen-

¹ Twenty years ago there were not enough textbooks in China for use in schools and colleges, and none in the sciences. The National Bureau of Compilation was established, and today up to B.A. all teaching in Science is done in the Chinese language at the Peking and Nanking universities.

dent country, the course of education there has been more natural. Like India, it is a nation consisting of many nationalities. It is suffering from the birth-pangs which usually attend a nation in its formative period. There are a number of universities in China, the chief of them being at Peking, the old capital of China. All the teaching is done in the national vernacular, but European languages are taught in secondary schools and colleges. When a student takes the degree examination, he has to pass the proficiency tests in two European languages, one of them being necessarily English. A graduate of a Chinese university can carry on his business in English, French or German without the slightest difficulty, and I know of many who came straight from China and easily accommodated themselves in various English and Continental universities. They do not know the technique of the Elizabethan stage and drama, Shelley's romanticism and Hardy's pessimism unless they are specially interested in these subjects, nor do they have to suffer all the agonies that Indian students have to when day after day a Bengali professor expounds the 'beauties' of English poets. Assuming that twenty-five per cent of those who have to read English literature ultimately graduate from Indian universities, it is important to know how many graduates remember anything of the English poets and novelists a year later. It is my experience that all their knowledge imposed from outside vanishes into thin air. Perhaps a few of them, say one per cent, carry with them an enthusiasm for learning and an intelligent appreciation of what they were taught. I fully appreciate the cultural influence of English literature on the Indian mind, though the analogy of the influence of Latin on the European mind stressed by many distinguished Englishmen and Indians is both

specious and misleading. But I believe experience will prove that that small minority of students—about one per cent—who really care for literature will achieve the same proficiency in English and an intelligent appreciation of its literature, even if we stop teaching Shakespeare and Milton to the general body of students. It is not proposed to abolish English from the curricula, as I have pointed out in the five proposals made previously. We cannot afford to do so even if we could, for we should not isolate ourselves from the main current of western civilization, with which English forms the chief link.

His Exalted Highness, the Nizam of Hyderabad, established the Osmania University in his State with the avowed object of imparting instruction in Urdu instead of English. Books have been translated from all European languages for purposes of university teaching, and new textbooks have been written by members of the University. In less than fifteen years they are able to carry on teaching in all arts and science subjects in Urdu. The example of the Osmania University should prove a source of inspiration to all other universities in India.

A number of people have expressed the opinion that if more time is devoted to the teaching of our vernaculars, the standard of English in schools and colleges will go down. They put forward the plea that already the standard is so low that first and second year students in colleges cannot follow lectures delivered in English. They forget that students need not 'follow' lectures, for the medium of instruction will be their own vernacular and not English. Does it matter if the standard of English deteriorates so long as the standard of the vernaculars improves? Did England stop teaching English because the standard of Latin was going down? It can

be proved, however, that the standard of English will not deteriorate. What is wrong with Indian students at the present moment is that they cannot 'think'. They have not learnt their own language; they have not been able to master the foreign one forced on them: they have fallen between two stools. When you take away the language of a community, you take away its ideas, too. All coherent thinking depends upon an adequate expression of what we think. To write badly is to think badly. One who has not mastered any language is inevitably a bad thinker. A young student who knows his own language well has learnt to think for himself. He has better chances of mastering a foreign language than one who starts with an uneducated mind—who has not learnt to think coherently. And this is why the damaging assertion is made that Indian universities turn out unfinished products, half-educated graduates, who wander about aimlessly because they have not learnt to think or to know their own minds, who can never stand up as men and fight for their convictions.

The Punjab University Enquiry Committee clearly stated that as a result of the sad neglect of the vernacular languages 'a large proportion of the pupils are unable to think or write clearly in any language'.

I have observed many students from the Osmania University prosecuting higher studies in British universities, and I have no reason to think that they fare worse than other Indian students. On the other hand it is my experience that they do exceedingly well in foreign universities. The Hartog Committee reported: 'Many witnesses have told us that the boy who has received a vernacular schooling, though he may be handicapped at first by his weakness in English, very often outstrips the Anglo-Vernacular boy in the long run, in consequence of

his better grasp of those general subjects which he has learnt through the vernacular.'

THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH IN INDIAN UNIVERSITIES

One may start with the opinion of a distinguished member of the Indian Educational Service: 'No foreign language can take the place of the mother-tongue. The habits that condition effective speaking and reading aloud, intelligent reading to oneself, effective literary discrimination and appreciation should all be inculcated in the mother-tongue. It is not possible to throw over the mother-tongue and substitute for it some foreign tongue; even if it were possible, it would be too expensive; even if it cost nothing, no country would desire it.'¹ Not only is it impossible to impart instruction to a nation in a foreign tongue borrowed from six thousand miles away and belonging to a people entirely different from us in temperament and character, but 'even if it were possible, it would be too expensive', not in money spent, but in the colossal 'waste' of the entire adolescents of a nation. We have rushed into a blind alley, and we have paid dearly for it.

It is only in the mother-tongue that a precise communication of emotions or thoughts or a system of emotions or thoughts is possible. This precise communication is not so difficult in the case of pure thought. A purely logical 'argument' and a proposition of Euclid lend themselves to translation; or to say the same thing in other words, an Indian student can think in his own mother-tongue, as he almost always does, and express a logical 'argument' in English or any other foreign language. Pure thought lends itself to symbols

¹ From a paper read by Professor H. Y. Langhorne at the Punjab Education Conference, 1927.

which have an invariable and constant value. But literature is the handmaid of emotion, and symbols not only vary but possess emotive and associative nuances which a foreigner would find hard to grasp. The author wants the reader to feel the particularity of his emotion. In order to understand what the author means, the reader tries to evoke in himself a similar emotional condition. The uncertain factors are the author's temperament and the reader's temperament. When we extend this problem of precise communication to a large number of readers, we may presume an 'average' temperament on which similar conditions will produce similar effects. For purposes of mass education we have to assume the existence of such an abstract entity as 'average' temperament. It is difficult for an author to compel others (of his own nation) to feel the particularity of his emotions. Is the average Indian temperament the same as, or similar to, the average English temperament? India, the land of magic, snakes, elephants and naked fakirs, and now the land of starved, ignorant, superstitious and exploited millions; the land of ancient traditions, Hindu mythology and Mogul emperors—it is easy to grow lyrical, sentimental, exasperated while talking of India. The fact remains, threadbare by repetition, that no two 'temperaments' could be more different. How infinitely more difficult becomes the task of communicating the emotions of an English author to Indian students!

We admire the blind optimism of our university authorities, for in their undaunted pursuit of knowledge they go even a step further. They have made it compulsory for all Indian students to read and *appreciate* Shakespeare, even though they do not possess an adequate knowledge of the English language. Indian students, when they join college after Matriculation, cannot as a rule follow

lectures delivered in English, a fact to which reference is made both in the Hartog Report and the Punjab Quinquennial Review.¹ Yet hundreds of thousands of them who cannot write five lines of correct English, who often do not know when to say 'Yes' and when to say 'No' in answer to a question, are made to read *en masse* Shelley's *Skylark*, Milton's *Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity* and Shakespeare's plays. They have never seen a skylark, they do not know why a high-born maiden sits in her tower and why Shelley begins:

Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!
Bird thou never wert . . .

They cannot make head or tail of Milton's personifications, and they are ignorant of the conventions of the Elizabethan stage as an Englishman is of the conventions of Persian poetry. Most of them cannot, even to save their lives, understand the rules of prosody and blank verse. Yet they must write critiques at the examination on various problems of *Hamlet* and *Twelfth Night*.

As for the Indian professor of English Language and Literature (no irony intended), there are many such who

¹ 'We have to point out that owing to the inefficiency of the Matriculation standard the waste begins at an early stage if the boy proceeds to an Intermediate course in which instruction is given in the form of mass lectures. The Calcutta University Commission pointed out the inability of the average boy to understand such lectures, owing to his want of knowledge of English. We have received precisely similar and more recent evidence on this point.'—Hartog Committee's *Review of the Growth of Education in British India*, 1929.

'The School Board after a prolonged investigation came to the conclusion that the standards of examination in general are low and are deteriorating, especially in English. The attainments of the first year students in colleges are such that very many are unable to follow the lectures adequately.'—*The Punjab Quinquennial Review of Education*, 1922-27.

dazzle their young pupils with 'all sound and fury signifying nothing'. If they can be convinced in their old age that they have been working in the wrong shop, something will have been achieved.

D. H. Lawrence said: 'I count it a mistake of our mistaken democracy that every man who can read print is allowed to believe that he can read all that is printed.' Surely it is infinitely more stupid to force indiscriminately a mixture of the English classics and post-war prose down the throats of a million young boys of a country which has nothing in common with England. It is psychologically barbarous. It is mass culture with a vengeance.

Lawrence's *Fantasia of the Unconscious*¹ is not the last word on the theory of education, but certainly one of the best books so far written on the subject. He says:

Why should we cram the mind of a child with facts that have nothing to do with his own experience and have no relation to his own dynamic activity? Let us realize that every extraneous idea effectively introduced into a man's mind is a direct obstruction of his dynamic activity. Every idea which is introduced from outside into a man's mind and which does not correspond to his own dynamic nature is a fatal stumbling-block for that man—is a cause of error for his true individual activity and a derangement to his psychic being.

We are painfully aware of the disastrous effects on the mind of an Indian student of this 'literature' introduced from outside. He has no confidence in his own composition, because of his poor knowledge of the foreign language; he has no ideas, for he has not been trained to think. No wonder he demands eight-anna notes and commentaries to catch the spirit of the *Ode to a Night-*

¹ Heinemann.

ingale and to understand the characters of Rosalind and Celia and Feste. The whole thing is uncouth and vulgar.

In a civilized world the business of the teacher is to develop and not to impose a culture. If this proper state of things is reversed and culture becomes a classroom rather than a social product, we shall get from our universities prigs rather than gentlemen, pedants rather than cultivated men. Graduates from Indian universities usually do not attain even an appreciable mental development; if they do, they are so completely divorced from the life of the community that they tend to become prigs and pedants. The Soviet Union has given the right lead to all agricultural and non-capitalist countries in education. In the U.S.S.R. they aim at realistic education, their idea being to attach schools to factories and farms, where not only technical training is given, but where an attempt is also made to show the student his relation to the world at large.¹

University students are a part of the whole community, and take an active interest in the theatre, the cinema, the factory and the farm. They are workers as well as students. How sound this idea of education is cannot be discussed here. I am told that in certain village schools in the Punjab the primary course has been

¹ 'The primary school is attached, let us say, to a margarine factory. A boy or girl of eleven or twelve is taught, therefore, in addition to the usual things, not merely the uses of the type of machinery employed in the preparation of margarine and the processes connected with the manufacture, but also what part margarine plays in the national economy. The history of the preparation of margarine in the Soviet Union, the history of the trade union to which the people belonging to the margarine factory are attached, and so on.'—'Education in the Soviet Union' by R. D. Charques in *International Affairs*, July, 1932.

increased from five to six years and an agricultural farm is attached to the school where children are given practical training. How far this experiment has proved successful I do not know. It may be, like the village reconstruction societies and prisoners' aid societies, only a 'fiction' to be recorded in an annual report to give credit to a few officials or to satisfy the Government conscience. Those who believe in the achievements of the Corporate State in Italy with regard to the education of the Italian masses may read *Fontamara*.¹ The same, if not more, may be said of the conditions of education in Indian villages.

It has many times been urged that a very large number of Indians write and speak English as if it were their mother-tongue. India has produced Toru Dutt, Tagore, Sarojini Naidu, Gandhi and others who have written poetry and prose in English which is at once the envy and despair of Englishmen. I do not want to minimize the achievements of Indian writers of English. However, it may be pointed out that most of these notable figures are not the products of Indian universities; either they learnt English independently or in English universities, which makes all the difference. Secondly, the test of a suitable education is its effect on the masses, and not on the chosen few. Our concern is with the rank and file, and not with a few shining lights. It is my belief that a Tagore or a Sarojini would have been there even if English were taught as a second language, and not made the medium of instruction, even if hundreds of boys and girls had never heard of the heroic couplet or blank verse and had been taught English only for purposes of communication and business. And thirdly, what is the

¹ By Ignazio Silone. English translation, Methuen.

value of Tagore's or Sarojini's poetry in English? Comparisons are odious, and more so in poetry. It is no use attempting 'ranking lists' of poets, saying Keats is greater than Arnold, and Yeats is greater than Tagore. Yet I cannot help saying that even Tagore's poetry in English is not first-rate and has not won and cannot win recognition at the hands of the best English critics. On the other hand the aestheticism of Tagore has set a fashion of 'sloppy' stuff. Quite unconsciously he has been the cause of a legion of young imitators in whose hands his admirable blend between prose and verse has become grotesque, and the cult of spiritual love a mere escape from healthy physical reactions. Their poetry is romantic in the pejorative sense. Judging from the effusions of these young Tagoreans and the amount of time and energy frittered away during their adolescence, one might say that it was an evil day when Tagore began to translate his poetry into English and the 'Nightingale of India' began to chant. We attach great value to Tagore's essays and short stories, Mahatma Gandhi's writings and Sir Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan's books on Indian philosophy, and other such work done in English. It was not their primary aim to write English prose; if they have incidentally produced fine prose in English, the greater is their achievement.

It is absolutely necessary for us, under the circumstances, to abandon this attempt to teach literary appreciation of the English classics to the multitude. This problem of 'teaching' literary appreciation to all is not confined to India alone.

In India our system of education has become grotesque because the literature we 'teach' is not our own. The first approach to literature should be intuitive rather

than mechanical. The approach of an Indian student to English literature cannot be intuitive. It is not even as direct as it might be for he is not allowed to see things for himself. The teacher and the 'bazaar notes and commentaries' supply him with a pretty complicated machinery of rules and formulas prematurely, and do not wait till he finds them useful to him in his work. I cannot help quoting from a book recently issued by the Australian Council for Educational Research:

In the light of the evidence it seems that we should deliberately abandon our present attempt to 'teach' literary appreciation to the multitude, and that instead we should give special training only to those with aptitude, and devote our remaining energies to making the ordinary man a competent writer and an intelligent reader. To do this would be to kill two birds with one stone. Those of poor or moderate ability might be trained to do something within their powers, and thus be saved the mortification of making themselves ridiculous by attempting something beyond them, and those of exceptional ability could develop their talent to the utmost possible degree. At present we are attempting too much and achieving too little. It is true that 'Low aim, not failure, is crime', but that does not mean it is virtuous to try to hit the moon. If we can make people competent writers and intelligent readers, other things can be added; if we can't, the less that is added the better. And further, as will become clearer as our discussion proceeds, if this whole plan be followed, we shall probably bridge the widening gulf between literature and life.

We have vainly attempted to put a foreign language in the place of our vernaculars. What has been the result? The Calcutta University Commission pointed out in 1917 that the standards of university examinations are deplorably low. This has been confirmed by a number of committees and quinquennial reviews of various provincial education departments. And yet more than

42 LANGUAGE, UNIVERSITIES AND NATIONALISM IN INDIA

fifty per cent of students fail at university examinations throughout India. No other country in the world can be accused of such criminal waste. Below are given statistics showing the percentages of passes at the three main university examinations:

TABLE I
TOTAL NUMBER OF ARTS STUDENTS IN INDIA CLASSIFIED
BY STAGES OF INSTRUCTION

| | | I YEAR | II YEAR | III YEAR | IV YEAR |
|---------|-----|--------|---------|----------|---------|
| 1926-27 | ... | 18,788 | 20,933 | 10,208 | 11,716 |
| 1931-32 | ... | 26,378 | 23,395 | 11,304 | 12,242 |

As many as 86,466 students sat for the Matriculation, 23,395 for the Intermediate and 12,242 for the B.A. degree examination in 1932 in Indian universities (the figures include about 2,400 students from Intermediate colleges), and considering the past percentages, the colossal amount of the yearly slaughter can easily be estimated.

TABLE II
PERCENTAGE OF SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATES BY PROVINCES
(1) *Matriculation*

| | 1916-17 | 1921-22 | 1926-27 | 1931-32 |
|----------------------|---------|---------|---------|----------------|
| Bombay ... | 45 | 50 | 41 | 37 |
| Bengal ... | 73 | 78 | 53 | 65 |
| United Provinces ... | 48 | 50 | 55 | (not declared) |
| Punjab ... | 68 | 72 | 53 | 61 |

(2) *Intermediate Arts and Science*

| | 1912 | 1917 | 1922 | 1927 | 1931-32 |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|------|---------|
| Madras | 44 | 24 | 27 | 34 | 34 |
| Bombay | 69 | 63 | 51 | 42 | 60 |
| Bengal | 50 | 56 | 68 | 47 | 48 |
| United Provinces | 45 | 44 | 49 | 57 | 56 |
| Punjab | 41 | 54 | 56 | 44 | 58 |
| Bihar and Orissa | ... | ... | 46 | 40 | 35 |

(3) *B.A. and B.Sc.*

| | 1912 | 1917 | 1922 | 1927 | 1931-32 |
|-------------------------|------|------|------|------|----------------|
| Madras | 62 | 71 | ... | 50 | 40.1 |
| Bombay | 72 | 57 | 68 | 56 | 54.2 |
| Bengal | 60 | 51 | 71 | 43 | 53.7 |
| United Provinces | 43 | 42 | 41 | 65 | (not declared) |
| Punjab | 35 | 46 | 43 | 55 | 40 |

Are Indians mentally deficient as a race, or Indian colleges full of imbeciles? I need not try to refute such a charge, for foreigners, far more experienced and shrewd, have paid a high tribute to the intelligence of Indians. As far back as 1838 Sir Charles Trevelyan wrote: 'The Bengali children seem to have their faculties developed sooner and to be quicker and more self-possessed than English children. As far as capability of acquiring knowledge is concerned the native mind leaves nothing to be desired. The faculty of learning languages is particularly powerful in it.' Father T. van der Schueren, a Belgian missionary who coached a large number of Indian students from various provinces, said in a paper read before the East India Association in London in 1921: 'The Indian mind develops sooner than the European mind. I consider that the Indian boy

at the age of ten, twelve or fourteen is fully a year ahead of the English or Belgian boy with regard to mental development, quickness of perception and self-possession.' And after all India has been the home of religious leaders, great kings and administrators, poets, scholars; and even in spite of this system of education India today can count a large number of notable figures in various spheres of life. We can say with confidence that we, as a nation, are not less intelligent than any other nation in the world, certainly not less than some of the traditionally phlegmatic western nations. Indians possess alert minds capable of mastering all types of subjects. Those Indian students who overcome the initial difficulty of being able to express themselves with ease in English prove as good scholars with as sane judgements and right 'values' as those of any other nation.

The best way to judge an Indian student is to meet him outside the college. He is intelligent and gay, his sense of humour is remarkable. Inside the classroom the teacher's eye meets with a huge crowd of 125 or 150 students—most of them looking dull, inattentive and occasionally hostile. There is no harmony between what a student hears in the lecture-room and the way he spends the rest of his time. He actually tries to forget the time he spends during lecture hours as an unpleasant interlude. The result is that his perceptions are not developed into information, his information is not developed into judgement, his experience is not developed into character. We want to win his interest, we want to make the atmosphere of the lecture-room more real, and above all we want to transform into his service as much as possible of the wealth of material which goes floating down the stream of his consciousness. The only way

to achieve all this is to make his vernacular the medium of instruction. We have provided enough examination-fodder for the hungry gods of the Indian universities. It is time we declared a halt and took stock of the whole situation.

The following table shows in broad outline the place of English in the present educational system. The position is true of all provinces in India with necessary modifications.

| STAGE OF INSTRUCTION | AGE OF LEARNER | MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION |
|----------------------|----------------|--|
| Primary ... | 6-10 | Teaching is done entirely in the vernacular. |
| Middle ... | 10-14 | English is taught, but is not the medium of instruction. |
| Higher English... | 14-16 | English is mainly used as the medium of instruction. |
| College ... | 16-20-22 | Three stages of two years each, after which university examinations are taken, viz. the Intermediate, B.A. and M.A. examinations. English is the sole medium of instruction. |

The Hartog Committee estimated that at present an Indian student has to devote one-third of his time to the study of English alone.

CHAPTER III

LANGUAGE AND MINORITIES

WE have seen the tragic waste resulting from the present system of education, and have arrived at two important conclusions: (1) we must replace English by the Indian vernaculars in the two Matriculation classes and in six years carry the process of vernacularization to its logical end right up to the B.A. classes, and (2) Hindustani cannot, at the present moment, be regarded as the lingua franca of India.

How far it is possible to make Hindustani the lingua franca of India I shall discuss later. What is more relevant to the present discussion is to offer a plausible solution of the difficult question as to what vernacular or vernaculars should be adopted by each university. There are seventeen universities in India, eight of which (Calcutta, Madras, Bombay, the Punjab, Patna, Nagpur, Andhra and Agra) are of the affiliating type and nine (Benares, Aligarh, Dacca, Allahabad, Lucknow, Delhi, Rangoon, Mysore and Annamalai) to a greater or lesser extent of the unitary type. Osmania University is in a class by itself, being the only university in which the medium of instruction is an Indian vernacular, namely Urdu.

The following table gives the total number of students undergoing university education in India during the three years 1927, 1931 and 1932:

| <i>Year</i> | | | <i>Number of Students</i> |
|-------------|-----|-----|---------------------------|
| 1927 | ... | ... | 93,741 |
| 1931 | ... | ... | 100,349 |
| 1932 | ... | ... | 105,238 |

These figures should impress us with the magnitude of the problem.

Indian provinces are as big as most European countries. For instance, the Punjab is greater than Great Britain in area, and has a population of 24,000,000. Madras is greater than Italy in area as well as in population. Bengal has a population of 50,000,000, while the population of France is 42,000,000. These comparisons throw an interesting light on the areas served by the universities in India.

Each province contains a number of communities speaking different languages and dialects. Thus each provincial university has to serve the needs of communities speaking different languages, and this is not satisfactory. To remedy language complications, it is to be hoped that more universities will be established, for there is actually room for them. In the Madras Presidency no less than four main languages are spoken (Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kanarese), and in the Punjab we have Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs insisting on reading three different languages, though their spoken language is the same. It would be futile to offer the same solution for the language problem of each province, for conditions vary considerably. Every province has to solve its difficulties in the best way possible under the circumstances. In view of the peculiar difficulties of the province in the matter of language, the Punjab University Enquiry Committee recommended the present flexible system, under which each candidate can answer questions in any vernacular he chooses. Such a system can, however, be adopted only up to the Matriculation standard, for beyond this standard, the difficulties become serious. From the point of view of teaching it would be possible only in purely communal colleges, such as the

D.A.-V., the Islamia and the Khalsa colleges, where students of one community receive education. It would be unworkable in Government and Missionary colleges or other non-communal institutions. As regards the university, examiners would have to be selected on a linguistic basis, and there would be needless duplication of work.

In this connexion it is instructive to read the convention adopted by the League of Nations with regard to the education of the children of the minorities in the following countries: Albania, Austria, Estonia, Czechoslovakia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Latvia, Hungary, Poland, Memel, Lithuania and Turkey. I will quote extracts from the treaties made by two such countries:

Austria will provide in the public educational system in towns and districts in which a considerable proportion of Austrian nationals other than those of German speech are resident adequate facilities for ensuring that in the primary schools the instruction shall be given to the children of such Austrian nationals through the medium of their own language. This provision shall not prevent the Austrian Government from making the teaching of the German language obligatory in the said schools.¹

Czechoslovakia will provide in the public educational system in towns and districts in which a considerable proportion of Czech-Slovak nationals of other than Czech speech are resident adequate facilities for ensuring that in the primary schools the instruction shall be given to the children of such Czech-Slovak nationals through the medium of their own language. This provision shall not prevent the Czech-Slovak Government from making the teaching of a Czech language obligatory in the said schools.²

¹ *Treaty of Peace between the Allied and Associated Powers and Austria*, Section III, Article 68.

² *Treaty between the United States of America, France, Great Britain, Italy, Japan and Czechoslovakia*, Part II, Chapter I, Article 9.

The language of the majority will inevitably be the medium of instruction in the provincial university, though all the 'minority' languages will be taught in schools to children up to the age of 13 or 14, i.e. in primary and secondary schools. For instance, Urdu will be the language of the Punjab University and Hindi of Allahabad, Tamil of Madras, Telugu of Andhra and Bengali of Calcutta. Those people who are particularly desirous of their children reading a language other than the one adopted by their university would be at liberty to send their children to the university where that language is the one in use. This might entail some hardship, but we have to create the right type of educational system at any cost. A sound system of education is a more valuable national asset than a mistaken ideal of Hindu or Muslim beliefs or Brahmin or non-Brahmin culture alleged to be inherent in Hindi, Urdu, Tamil or Telugu.

WHY ENGLISH?

Politically we are a nation to be governed under the new constitution by a Federal Government. We must have one language for purposes of administration, trade, commerce, communication and to conduct the business of the Federal Assembly. For more than two hundred years French has been used in Europe for purposes of business and international negotiations. Now English is fast assuming the same status. In India we want a language for similar purposes on a more extensive scale. For good or ill English is already the inter-provincial language of India. We should teach English in all secondary and higher educational institutions in India as a compulsory but second language. English literature will become one of the optional subjects like all other subjects. As in China and Japan students have to pass a proficiency

test in two foreign languages, in India too students will have to pass proficiency tests in English at Matriculation and degree examinations.

I am proposing this not as a measure of expediency. I think that even if it was possible, Indians should not do away with English. Of course I do not suppose that it is possible, for India is a long way off from *swaraj*; and even after its attainment we could not afford to isolate ourselves from the main currents of western thought. The world has become one as it was never before in world history. Our means of communication have become so rapid that a quick exchange of ideas is continually taking place. In order to keep pace with the march of events and the growth of new ideas we have got to link ourselves with the western world. English at the present moment is the language of many countries, and will gradually become, even if the British Empire breaks up, the language of three-fourths of the whole world. Therefore it is in our best interests that we should retain English as a second language in the curricula of our educational institutions.

I would draw the attention of my readers to Mr C. K. Ogden's attempt at providing an auxiliary language for the whole world. It is claimed by Mr Ogden and his collaborators at Cambridge and elsewhere that 'a modified form of English can be produced with a simplified vocabulary and grammar, capable of being learnt by an intelligent adult or adolescent in a couple of months and well suited to become the universal auxiliary language'. It would be a language with no literary pretensions, but clear and precise for international commerce and science. Mr Ogden calls it Basic English. He says in the introductory chapter to his book: 'It is clear that the problem of a universal language would have been solved

if it were possible to say all that we normally desire to say with no more words than can be made easily legible to the naked eye, in column form, on the back of a sheet of notepaper. The fact, therefore, that it is possible to say almost everything we normally desire to say with the 850 words on the frontispiece is not without significance.¹ We need not question the unconscious imperialistic motives, if any, of Mr Ogden and his supporters, as some have done, but should try to judge the question on its merits. He states his reasons for recommending Basic English in preference to French or German or an artificial language, such as Esperanto, as follows: 'Moreover, when learnt, an artificial language still awaits a millennium in which conversion shall cease to be confined to a few thousand enthusiasts; and here the importance of accurate statistics is once more apparent. It is often stated that English is the language of 180,000,000 people, and this figure is often compared with the figures for French, German, Spanish, etc., with the implication that it would be invidious to be influenced by so small a lead when the tide of national prejudice is running so high. Actually, however, English is the expanding administrative (or auxiliary) language of over 500,000,000 people, and financial reasons alone should convince even those who resent the fact that it is bound to expand rapidly in the near future.'

English, French, German and Italian are the four foreign languages taught all over Europe, America, Japan and China. Students of every country have to pass proficiency tests in one or two languages other than their mother-tongue. Such a course has become

¹ C. K. Ogden, *Basic English: A General Introduction with Rules and Grammar* (Kegan Paul).

absolutely necessary in modern times; and while we teach English as a second and compulsory language, we shall have to make provision for the teaching of French, German and Italian for those who go in for specialized studies in literature and science. The study of European languages will become essential for us in future, and English will become the inevitable part of our educational programme. Japan and China have already set the example by giving English precedence over other European languages in their educational departments and universities.

It is futile to believe that we can transplant English literature on Indian soil, or that we could give birth to a neo-classical English literary tradition in India. Indian educational policy has followed this path, and with what results we have seen. Those who dreamt fondly with Macaulay that English literature would fulfil in India what Greek literature achieved in Rome or Latin in Europe had counted upon a rapid development of the Indian vernaculars; but since these continued to be neglected, the teaching of English literature became a hindrance instead of a stimulus.

I have advocated the teaching of English as a second language for reasons already stated. I venture to add that even if we believe in the literary value of English, the best way to make full use of English literature is to encourage our own vernaculars. French literature has always exerted a powerful stimulating influence on English literature; so have English models on Bengali prose style. One living literature can stimulate another, not revive a dead one. Tagore gained from English certain qualities of style which he could not have gained from, say, Hindi. So did other Bengali writers, such as Bankim, D. L. Roy and Dhan Gopal Mukerji. Western literatures

borrowed from one another freely without cramping their own originality and independence. The chief vernacular literatures in India—Bengali, Urdu, Hindi, Gujarati, Marathi and Tamil have been deeply influenced by English drama and fiction during the last thirty years. It is a grave mistake to suppose that Indian vernacular literatures have borrowed from English literature because we have been teaching it in our colleges to students *en masse*. They have done so in spite of our badly planned teaching, which kills all originality and habits of independent thinking. Our first task is to teach our young students to think and not to cram. This can be done only in our own vernaculars. This explains why most of our vernacular authors are not the products of our universities. The English poets, dramatists and novelists who were deeply influenced by French models knew French only as a second language. The right method to borrow from English literature is not to replace our vernaculars by English, as we have been foolishly doing for a century, but to master our vernaculars first and to learn English as a second language. Let people devote themselves to business, agriculture, industries, medicine, engineering, politics and other professions open to them. It is the lot of one in a thousand to take to literature as a profession, to become a man of letters, a poet, a dramatist or a novelist. Let us leave it to him who follows the difficult path of letters to master foreign languages.

I may refer in passing to the problem of teaching Hindustani as a second language in the provinces of which it is not the vernacular. Suppose a miracle happens, and Hindus and Muslims agree upon one script—Hindi, Urdu or Roman—how will the school curriculum be affected? A boy of ten, if he belongs to a

linguistic minority community in a province, will have to learn his own language, the language of the majority community which is the medium of instruction, English and Hindustani and possibly a fifth language at a later stage when he goes in for specialized or research studies. The system would be educationally unsound. An educated Punjabi Hindu generally knows four languages—Punjabi, Urdu, Hindi and English. The first three have a good deal in common. Some people regard the Punjabi as very fortunate, but I can say from personal experience that this babel of tongues causes not a little confusion in his mind. His thoughts are unconsciously being translated into different modes of speech. He talks a language which is a strange mixture of English, Urdu and Punjabi.¹

It may be admitted that events may shape themselves in such a way that it becomes imperative for us to pursue this educationally unsound course, for national considerations have to be given precedence over every other consideration.

LANGUAGE AND NATIONALISM

Europe presents us with examples of a nation speaking more than one language, e.g. Switzerland, or two nations (almost hostile to each other) possessing a common language, e.g. Germany and Austria. The development of a nation has often synchronized with a renaissance in its language. Sixteenth-century England and seventeenth-century Holland are classic examples of this phenomenon. The growth of a language has always been one of the major factors in nation-building. Every great poet who helps in the growth of a language is a

¹ For instance, a lawyer may be heard saying in court: 'Yeh argument water *nahin* hold *kardi hai*.'

potential maker of the nation to which he belongs. It is difficult to estimate how great has been the part played by Shakespeare, much less the English Bible, in making England what she is today. Homer and Dante did no less for ancient Greece and Renaissance Italy.

The nineteenth century in Europe saw the growth of extreme nationalism. Slavs, Magyars and other down-trodden nationalities became acutely conscious of the injustice and tyranny under which they had lived for centuries. The Great War broke up the fabric of a number of empires, and some of the culturally conscious minorities obtained their independence. A number of new States came into being, namely Czecho-Slovakia, Yugo-Slavia, Hungary, Lithuania, Finland, etc. Modern consciousness knows nothing higher than the idea of the State, the conception of its greatness, its power and the lofty aims of its development. The problems of minorities in Europe have become extremely tangled, because the post-war States suffer no disruptive elements in their far-reaching planned economy. The Jews must suffer in Germany, the Germans in Memel, the Greeks, Croats and Armenians in a number of countries. The modern dictators want the whole nation drilled and organized to a man. Hence a minority with a different culture and language has become an anomaly. The language of the majority must be imposed on the minorities in every country. Whether the German-speaking people will unite and form one big State to the ruthless exclusion of all minorities and thus set up a new model for others to copy, or political and economic factors which have in the past outweighed racial and linguistic factors in such States as Switzerland and Belgium will continue to do so, is a question yet to be decided.

As we turn to India, the problem of the national

language and of various majorities and minorities is crossed and recrossed by religious differences, foreign domination and inter-provincial jealousies. The main issues have already been stated. If we ever have a common language for the whole of India, it will not interfere with the growth of our vernaculars, whatever political ideology India might follow in the future. Hence we insist that vernaculars must replace English in our schools and colleges. The second question is whether Hindustani can be the *lingua franca* of India.

There is a general feeling among most educated Indians that the national movement owes a great deal to the English language, that the homogeneity of modern India depends upon our ability to converse with each other in English. It is true that at present a Punjabi, a Bengali and a Madrasi can exchange their views only through one language—English. When we take into consideration the fact that not more than two per cent of the people can talk English, we at once realize the essential weakness of the Indian national movement. Wherever it has become a mass movement, the foreign language has played no part in its success. The Indian National Congress is predominantly a bourgeois body, suffering from all the chronic diseases of the bourgeoisie. Educated Indians are the *petite bourgeoisie*, whose pseudo-culture and education plus their vested interests in their cherished universities will not let the vernaculars grow, let alone a national movement or a national language. That we should retain English as a second language is not because it will lead to national homogeneity or the growth of a new culture or a new literature, but to keep our contacts with the western countries alive.

An inquiry into the mind of the Indian intelligentsia

is bound to show that its present chaotic condition is the result of, first, the present commercialized system of education carried on in a foreign language, and, secondly, the persistence with which the Indian intelligentsia apes all the imitable features (which are as a rule the worst) of the English intelligentsia. It would not, therefore, be out of place to say a few words about the intelligentsia in England. Dr F. R. Leavis, who sees farther than most people, says: 'What we have lost is the organic community with the living culture it embodied.'¹ 'Instead of the community, urban or rural, we have, almost universally, suburbanism.'² Dr I. A. Richards thinks that *The Waste Land* is the most representative poem of today, as it is the expression of the predicament of this generation. He remarks that the 'best-sellers', magazine verse, academy pictures, etc., are 'decreasing in merit'.³ Imagine the condition of a country where the intelligentsia, educated in a foreign language, is completely divorced from the rest of the community and is completely at the mercy of Hollywood films, English 'best-sellers' and 'thrillers' and cheap newspapers and magazines; for there do not exist even the negative checks, such as repertory theatres, operas, art exhibitions, etc., whatever they are worth. No wonder that every big town in India has Literary Leagues and Art and Culture Societies that do no creative work, but hold receptions, debates and tea-parties to amuse themselves, and yet continue to believe that they are fulfilling the functions of drama, art, literature and music in the life of a community.

¹ Leavis and Thompson, *Culture and Environment* (Chatto and Windus).

² *Ibid.*

³ I. A. Richards, *The Principles of Literary Criticism* (Kegan Paul).

Hindustani as a language hardly exists, but the seeds out of which it can grow are there. Its growth is possible, though not by half-hearted attempts, such as sentimental appeals made at public meetings. A national government could develop it, but what is more important is whether the people want to develop it or not. At present the two predominant communities in India are moving apart, and the prospect of unity between them seems remote. People in India have not realized the extreme importance of the Pan-Islamic movement spreading in every Muslim country—a phase of the upward rise of the proletariat all over the world, for it so happens that Muslims form the poorer classes, workers and peasants in North Africa, India, Iraq and China. If the French Revolution emancipated the bourgeoisie in Europe, the Russian Revolution is doing no less for the proletariat. This sympathetic ‘upward rise’ of peasants and workers all over the world, this heightened awareness, will strengthen the Pan-Islamic feeling, for the proletarian movement is professedly an international movement towards a classless society. The peasants and workers in India are perhaps the poorest in the world, and in that lies the strength of the appeal of Iqbal’s recent poetry—*Bal-i-ʿġabriel*—more than in his direct appeal to the Muslim ideology of complete equality and classlessness.

It is beyond the scope of this essay to discuss the political aspect of this movement. It is relevant to our present discussion to state that this movement will blight the growth of the new language, Hindustani, which we wish to create out of Urdu and Hindi. As long as Muslims look to countries outside India for inspiration and Hindus look backwards to antiquity and both of them follow a policy of aggressive communalism under

the disguise of self-defence and safeguarding their rights, the idea of having a common language as a result of the fusion of Urdu and Hindi must remain as remote as the Greek calends.

I believe that a national government in India could do a great deal to achieve this ideal. By making Hindustani compulsory in all primary schools in India, by a free distribution of educational films in Hindustani, by encouraging literature in Hindustani and through a national broadcasting service it may be possible for us to talk of Hindustani as a real language in a short period of twenty years. Who will usher in this national government?

We shall be able to set up a truly national government only through a body which is not controlled by factory owners and rich business men, one which undertakes to weaken so-called religion and all that goes under its name and which wins the confidence of Hindus and Muslims alike as Indians. Till then all our efforts towards a common language for India will remain tentative.

